

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A liquid food product containing particles of dehydrated lactic acid bacteria chosen from lactobacilli and bifidobacteria coated with at least one vegetable fat that is solid at ambient temperature, wherein said coated particles of lactic acid bacteria are in the form of and are called granules having have an average size of less than 200  $\mu\text{m}$ , wherein said vegetable fats are chosen from hydrogenated and nonhydrogenated, fractionated or unfractionated, esterified or nonesterified substances, food waxes, fatty acids, palm oils with an melting point (Mp) Mp of 45°C and 58°C, cocoa butter, peanut butter, palm kernel oil, carnauba wax with an Mp = 80-85°C, microcrystalline wax of petroleum origin, palmitic acid, and mixtures thereof, said vegetable fats having a melting point above 40°C, and wherein said granules coated particles contain lactic acid bacteria in an amount greater than or equal to  $1 \times 10^{10}$  CFU per gram of granules coated particles, said granules coated particles are free of starch, and said food product has a pH of less than or equal to 4.5 and a water content by weight of at least 90%.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the average size of said granules coated particles is between 150 and 200  $\mu\text{m}$ .
4. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food product [[it]] is in the form of a fermented milk or of a beverage.
5. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 4, wherein the beverage is a fruit juice, a mixture of milk and of fruit juice or a vegetable juice.
6. (Cancelled)

7. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 4, wherein the lactic acid bacteria are chosen from *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactobacillus plantarum*, *Bifidobacterium animalis* and *Bifidobacterium breve*.

8. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 5, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is a *Lactobacillus casei* I-1518.

9. (Previously Presented) A food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacteria are dehydrated by lyophilization prior to them being granulated.

10. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 9, wherein the bacteria are treated with a lyoprotectant prior to them being lyophilized.

11. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the particles of dehydrated bacteria before granulation have an average size of between 80 and 150  $\mu\text{m}$ .

12. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the particles of dehydrated bacteria have a water activity of less than 0.25.

13-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the concentration of dehydrated lactic acid bacteria in the granules coated particles is between  $1 \times 10^{10}$  CFU per gram of granules coated particles and  $5 \times 10^{11}$  CFU per gram of granules coated particles.

17. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein said granules coated particles have a water activity of less than 0.4.

18. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fat(s) represent(s) from 40% to 75% by weight relative to the total weight of the granules coated particles.

19. (Previously Presented) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the concentration of coated lactic acid bacteria is between  $5\times 10^6$  and  $5\times 10^9$  CFU per gram of said food product.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 1, wherein the amount of said granules coated particles is less than 2% by weight relative to the total weight of said food product.

22. (Currently Amended) The food product as claimed in claim 16, wherein the amount of said granules coated particles is between 0.01% and 1% by weight relative to the total weight of said food product.